



Department of Justice

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FRENCH CONSTRUCTION COMPANY CHARGED WITH BID RIGGING

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Department of Justice today charged Freyssinet et Cie, a French construction company, with conspiring to rig bids for several cable-stayed bridge projects in the United States.

In a one-count felony case filed in U.S. District Court in San Francisco, the Department's Antitrust Division charged that Freyssinet conspired with other suppliers to suppress and eliminate competition by rigging bids on the installation, production, and sale of materials and supplies for cable-stayed bridges between September 1996 and September 1997. According to the Department, Freyssinet and other suppliers agreed to allocate among themselves the contracts for several cable-stayed bridge projects and submitted artificially high, non-competitive bids for those projects in accordance with their agreements.

Construction of cable-stayed bridges is a form of specialty construction. The roadway of a cable-stayed bridge is suspended from cables attached to load-bearing towers.

"Road and bridge construction represents a significant portion of federal and state budgets," said Joel I. Klein, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Antitrust Division. "The Department will continue to prosecute vigorously international conspiracies that restrain competition and defraud American taxpayers."

Freyssinet is charged with violating Section One of the Sherman Act, which carries a

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maximum fine of \$10 million for corporations. The maximum fine may be increased to twice the gain derived from the crime or twice the loss suffered by the victims of the crime, if either of those amounts is greater than the statutory maximum fine.

Today's case is the first to arise out of an ongoing investigation of the specialty construction industry being conducted by the Justice Department's Antitrust Division, San Francisco Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Department of Transportation, Office of Inspector General in San Francisco.

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